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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TAIPEI 001146

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [AMGT](#) [UNGA](#) [MARR](#) [EAGR](#) [CVIS](#) [ABLD](#)
TW, CH
SUBJECT: THE DIRECTOR MEETS NEW FM YANG

REF: TAIPEI 1105

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Classified By: the Director for reasons 1.4(b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Although the results of President Ma's "diplomatic truce" with the PRC were mixed, Taiwan would continue efforts to improve cross-Straits ties, newly-appointed Foreign Minister Timothy Yang told the Director during their very cordial September 21 introductory meeting. Taiwan would ask its diplomatic allies to circulate position papers laying out its case for expanded participation in ICAO and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yang said. Before Taiwan could even be considered for the Visa Waiver Program, the Director told Yang, Taiwan needed to improve its passport issuance procedures. Yang made a pitch for renewing U.S. cabinet-level visits to Taiwan and emphasized the need to replace Taiwan's aging fleet of combat aircraft. The Director urged swift action on U.S. beef and asked for MOFA help in resolving permitting issues for the construction of a new AIT office compound. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Newly-appointed Foreign Minister Timothy Yang told the Director during their September 21 introductory call that he would continue the pragmatic foreign policy of his predecessor and of President Ma Ying-jeou. This policy recognized that it was important to pay attention to what was going on in the world, and not just on Taiwan, Yang said. This policy's impact on cross-Straits ties was clear, with a number of agreements signed and tensions greatly reduced. Although Taiwan's improved relations with China drew the most headlines, the U.S. relationship remained Taiwan's most important. This was not only because the United States and Taiwan shared common interests, but also common values. Yang expressed appreciation for U.S. support and encouragement which, he said, gave Taipei the confidence to pursue rapprochement with Beijing.

"Diplomatic Truce" Results Mixed

¶3. (C) Judging by his just-concluded assignment as Taiwan's chief representative in Indonesia, Yang said, it was not clear that PRC diplomats had responded to President Ma's "diplomatic truce" by being less aggressive in efforts to isolate Taiwan. One possible explanation, Yang said, was that PRC diplomats overseas had not yet been given instructions on how to deal with their Taiwan counterparts.

Certainly, he noted, the PRC Foreign Ministry was notoriously conservative on Taiwan issues. Finally, it was possible that instances of apparent ill-will by PRC diplomats reflected individual actions, rather than a coordinated MFA effort. The Ma administration was committed to its pragmatic approach to relations with the mainland, Yang said, and was prepared to be positive and patient in bringing about changes in PRC behavior.

UNGA Approach (Nearly) Final

14. (C) The Director noted that President Ma, National Security Council Secretary General and others had urged the United States to offer public support for Taiwan's efforts to expand its participation in international organizations. The United States was willing to be supportive, but needed to have a concrete proposal to say what exactly it might be able to do. Yang noted that the Foreign Ministry would announce the details of its strategy later that day. Rather than asking its diplomatic allies to send a letter to UN Secretary General Ban, as originally planned (reftel), one or two allies would write directly to ICAO and UNFCCC members, conveying MOFA-drafted position papers laying out Taiwan's case for expanded participation. (Note: In a follow-on conversation with AIT Pol Chief, MOFA International Organizations Division Director General Paul Chang said the final versions of these papers had not yet been cleared.) Likewise, during the UNGA general debate, one or two allies would speak in favor of the proposal. Taiwan's goal was to get its point across in the least confrontational manner possible, he underscored.

15. (C) Noting the importance of Chinese views on the success

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of this effort, the Director asked whether officials from Taiwan had been in touch with their PRC counterparts. During his consultations in Washington prior to arrive in Taipei, he said, senior U.S. officials stressed the need for better understanding of Taiwan's outreach to the PRC. Yang agreed that it was important for Taiwan and the United States to keep in close touch about cross-Straits discussions, to avoid surprises, but said he did not know whether or if Taipei had previewed its UN approach with Beijing. Yang suggested that National Security Advisor Su Chi and Mainland Affairs Council Chair Lai Shin-yuan were the best sources of information on cross-Straits contacts.

Visa Waiver Needs Better Passports, Patience

16. (C) The United States also wanted to see closer ties with Taiwan, the Director said. Many of the issues on the table were complicated, he noted, so it would be important to be patient as we worked through them. For example, the United States was aware of Taiwan's interest in gaining entry into the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). The changes Taiwan needed to make to its passport issuance procedures before it would even be eligible for consideration for VWP, the Director said, reportedly could require new Taiwan legislation and take one-and-a-half to two years. While fixing this weakness would not guarantee Taiwan admission to the program, the Director stressed, it was an essential precondition for consideration and would, in any event, improve Taiwan's security.

Time for Final Action on Beef

17. (C) On the economic side of the relationship, the Director said, it was time to conclude discussions on U.S beef, which were holding up important conversations on other key trade, investment and economic concerns. Yang assured the Director that the issue was in its final stages. All that we needed, he stressed, was "a bit more patience." The Director

emphasized that, while patience was a virtue, the time had come to see concrete results.

Cabinet-Level Visits and F-16s

¶8. (C) Among the other issues on the bilateral agenda, Yang said, was resuming visits to Taiwan by U.S. cabinet-level officials. Pointing out how smoothly President Ma's U.S. transits had gone, Yang stressed that Taipei would not use a cabinet Secretary visit to score political points with the PRC. In addition to the substantive benefits such a trip might produce, however, it would boost Taiwan's morale and make the administration more confident in dealing with Beijing. The Director noted that Washington was already discussing the issue and did not want the fact that there had been no such visits during the last administration to set a precedent for the future.

¶9. (C) Yang briefly raised Taiwan's interest in maintaining the strong U.S.-Taiwan security relationship and, in particular, in acquiring F-16 C/Ds to replacing its aging fleet of aircraft. Increasingly, Yang said, Taiwan's aircraft were obsolete and the cross-Straits military situation imbalance was growing.

NOC Issues

¶10. (C) The Director briefed Yang on efforts to begin work on the AIT New Office Compound (NOC). The NOC would be the first "diplomatic style" compound built in Taipei, and municipal authorities therefore were perhaps not familiar with these buildings' special requirements. As a result, the Director said, they were attempting to enforce existing zoning and other permit requirements that were inappropriate for such a facility. Acting on a recommendation by National Security Council Deputy Secretary General Ho Sze-yin, the Director said, MOFA North American Affairs Director General Harry Tseng had already agreed to participate in AIT meetings with city officials, to ensure they understood the need for flexibility. The Director also noted that AIT might seek to

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secure a long-term lease on a piece of property adjacent to the NOC site, and might need MOFA help to make this happen. "Our support in principle is there on both issues," Yang replied, noting that it nonetheless would be important to iron out the specific details.

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